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Dr. B R O O K E's
S E R M O N

P R E A C H ' D I N

The CATHEDRAL CHURCH of *Chester*,

SEPTEMBER the 17th, 1732.

Being the Time of the A S S I Z E there.

PORTICO.

1870

THE RECORD

OF THE

PROGRESS

OF THE

INDUSTRIES

OF THE

UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

FOR THE

YEAR

1870

AND

1871

St. Paul's Argument to Felix consider'd.

A
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The CATHEDRAL CHURCH of *Chester*,

SEPTEMBER the 17th, 1732.

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By *T H O. B R O O K E*, LL.D. Dean of *Chester*.

Requested to be published.



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SEYMOUR

LECTURES IN

The Cathedral Church of St. Paul

SEPTUAGESIMA

Being the Time of the Ascension

IN TWO VOLUMES, THE FIRST OF WHICH

Contains the Lectures

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A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D in the
Cathedral Church of *Chester*.

ACTS xxiv. 25.

*And as he reason'd of Righteousness,
Temperance, and Judgment to come,
Felix trembled.*

TH E former Chapter acquaints us with a barbarous Design, carried on, with great Warmth and Subtilty, against the *Person* of *St. Paul*. The *Jews* found themselves incapable of answering his Arguments, and therefore they resolutely combine to attack his Life: A secret Conspiracy is immediately form'd, Methods of Execution are concerted, and they will *neither eat nor drink till they have kill'd him*. But no Schemes, how artfully soever they are laid, can escape the penetrating Eye of *God*: He takes his own Time to interpose in Behalf of his Servants; but, when ever he does interpose, the Business is effectually done. *St. Paul's* Nephew, being some how inform'd of their

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wicked Intentions, makes no Delay to acquaint him therewith : He, with equal Expedition, transmits the News to the *chief Captain*, whose Heart *God* had prepared to redress the Grievance, and to convey the *Prisoner* out of the reach of their intended Cruelty. He sends him, under a strong Guard, to *Felix* the *Governour* ; provides Necessaries, and Conveniences, for the Ease of his Journey ; and impartially states the Case with his own Hand. *Felix*, tho' an Heathen, entertains *Paul* with more Courtesy and good Nature, than his own *Countrymen* the *Jews* : He defers Judgment 'till his Accusers were come : orders his Confinement to be in a Palace, not a common Goal ; and fixes *Herod's* Judgment-Hall for the Place of his Residence.

In this *Chapter*, of which the *Text* is a Part, we are inform'd of an Indictment preferr'd against the *Apostle*, by the *High Priest* and *Elders* ; and the Cause managed by one *Tertullus*, an artful eloquent Man, the *Empe-
rour's Attorney-General*. The Enemy of *Christianity* had furnish'd them with a skilful *Orator* ; one who cou'd tune his Tongue any way for an advanced Fee ; and who, by Flattery and Falshood, endeavours to insinuate himself into the *Judge's* Favour, that he might, with better Success, implead, and run down the innocent *Apostle*. But his Adversaries were not more vigorous in the Prosecution, than he was zealous and undaunted in his Defence : He fully clears himself of the Accusation brought against him, and defies them to prove the Things they impeach'd him of : And, had not *Felix* been more inclin'd to please the *Jews*, and answer some bye-Ends of his own, than to administer Justice impartially, the harmless *Prisoner* had been immediately acquitted. However St. *Paul* was, in some Measure,

Measure, deliver'd from the Effects of their Malice; for tho' he return'd to his Confinement, yet none of his Acquaintance were prohibited *to minister, or come unto him*. Not many Days after this happen'd, He was sent for by *Felix*, and importuned to preach to his Family: The *Subject* of which *Sermon*, and the remarkable *Effect* it had, are briefly comprised in the *Text*. *And as he reason'd of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled.*

For a guilty *Prisoner* to show some Signs of *Terrour* before his lawful *Judge*, is a Thing common enough, and easily accounted for: But that a Person under so vigorous a Prosecution, shou'd harangue so freely and emphatically as to make even his *Judge tremble*, was a Case entirely new; and what, I think, no Records, beside the *Holy Scripture*, can furnish us with an Example of. But there is an higher *Place of Judicature* than That wherein *Felix* presided; a real *Court of Equity*; where *All* must one Day appear and stand Trial; and where Nothing, but the happy Testimony of a good Conscience, can assure us of Success: Where no Flourishes of Eloquence, no subtil evasive Distinctions, will serve turn; for *all things are naked and open to the Eyes of Him*, who has the *Judgment* of that *Day* committed to him. It was the Apprehension of this critical *Time* that affected the conscious *Governour* with such a *Trembling* and *Uneasiness*: He had been a Stranger to *Righteousness* and *Temperance*, and therefore could not but startle to think that the *Day of Judgment* was certainly approaching, when he must dearly pay for such voluntary Omissions.

In treating upon the WORDS I shall briefly consider the three Things, which were the Subject of St.

Paul's Discourse— *Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come.*

Secondly, *I will observe that remarkable Effect the Sermon had upon its principal Hearer — As he reason'd on these Things, Felix trembled.*

The First of those two *Duties* which St. Paul discoursed on is *Righteousness*. And that *Felix* wanted some Instructions in the Nature, or some Exhortations, as to the Practice, of this *Duty*, is evident from the 26th Verse; wherein we are told, That he expected to receive a *Sum of Money*, in order to procure his Release; and that, therefore, *he sent for him the next day, and communed with him.* This odious detestable Character was made known to the *Apostle*, who, without any mean servile Fear of offending, bravely attacks the *Favourite Vice*. He chose not with his Adversary *Tertullus* to coin Virtues where he found none, or to improve the *Cause* by flattering the *Judge*. No! the *Holy Spirit* of God is no Sycophant: And therefore the inspired *Orator*, like a skilful *Artist*, lays the Plaster where he observed the Sore; values not the Pain or Resentment of his Patient, being fully determined, if possible, to effect a Cure. And yet, because the mildest Methods are generally the most successful, he does not directly accuse him of *Injustice*, but he argues, or reasons, with him of *Righteousness*.

Righteousness is a very copious significant *Word*; and, taken in its full Latitude, comprehends all the *Duties* we owe to God or our Neighbour. So far as it relates to God it is properly call'd *Holiness*; and is that happy Temper of Mind, operating within us, and influencing our Actions, which only can entitle us to the *Vision of God*, and the Happiness consequent of that desirable *Sight*. That Part of it, which belongs to the

second

second Table, and regulates our Conduct towards our *Brethren*, is commonly term'd *Justice*: by the *Rule* whereof we are obliged to do to *Others*, what, in a suppos'd Change of Circumstances, we shou'd expect *Ourselves*. The great Importance of this *Duty* forbids me to pass it by unobserv'd: and it is of too large an Extent to be fully discuss'd at this Time. Permit me therefore to acquaint you in a *summary Way* what we must of Necessity perform, in order to avoid the Imputation of *Injustice*, in both *Relations*.

In the *first Place* then, *Righteousness* towards *God* does chiefly consist in this — That we entertain high and reverential Thoughts of his illustrious *Being*, and view the unconceivable Mysteries of the *Godhead* with a submissive Faith; that we regulate our Thoughts and Conceptions of him, by the unerring *Rules* of *Holy Scripture*, and readily assent to those reveal'd *Truths*, which our scanty Reason cannot yet comprehend. The glorious Attributes and Perfections of *God* should equally engage both our Wonder and our Love: And our Souls shou'd be fill'd with the most ardent Affection, tho' they are almost lost in Amazement at the same Time. We must acknowledge *God* the Great Creator and Governour of the World, and our most tender and compassionate Father; that our Souls and Bodies are entirely his free Gift, and daily supported by his bounteous Providence. In short we must confess, that, for every Thing we now enjoy, or ever expect to succeed in, we are indebted to him; and that there is no real *Good*, but what, originally, and primarily, descends from him. We shou'd represent him to our Minds as the most amiable of all *Beings*; most abundant in his Affection towards the *Children of Men*, and therefore justly entitled to their most

most grateful Returns. 'Twill become us to meditate frequently upon his undeserved Favours and Loving-kindnesses, particularly *That* of *Redemption* by his *Son* ; and to be cautious of frustrating the great Design of his *Mission*, by a scandalous Violation of his divine Commands. We must be constant in our Devotions to him both Publick and Private ; and not grudge to pay him that Homage, and Submission, which he has a natural and indisputable Right to. We are oblig'd to confide in his Promises, be fearful of his Threatnings, and entirely to acquiesce in his Appointments : And, to sum up all, we must devote Ourselves wholly to his Service : It must be our constant Study to serve and please him in every Thing we think of, and in every Action we set about.

But *secondly*, this *Righteousness* towards God must be accompanied with *Justice* to our *Neighbour*. And very reasonably may the infinite *Being* require the Performance of this *Duty* from his Creatures, since he is the most perfect *Pattern* and *Example* of it himself : Since not only the Self-sufficiency, and Perfection, of his Nature make it impossible for him to act *unjustly* ; but his infinite and immutable *Goodness* inclines him to the most just and equitable Dispensations towards us. In Obedience to his Commands, therefore, and in Imitation of his Example, we must carefully practise this *Branch* of *Righteousness*, the important *Duty* of doing *Justice*. And in Relation to this, as well as all other *Duties*, the plain Words of *Scripture* may be our most useful Guide, our best Counsellors ; may best instruct us in the Nature of the Duty, and the Measures of our Obedience. Herein we are enjoyn'd to * *render*
to

* Rom. xiii. 7.

to *All their Dues ; Tribute to whom Tribute is due ; Custom to whom Custom ; Fear to whom Fear ; Honour to whom Honour.* This Gradation of the *Apostle* chiefly regards our *Superiours* : And the Particulars thereof they are as much entitled to, by the *Laws of Justice*, as to any other Property they enjoy. As to our *Equals* the *divine Law* directs— † *To owe to no Man any Thing, but to love one another* : that is, we must not withhold from any One, without his Consent, what does in Right belong to him, or forcibly deprive him of That, which he only has a Title to. But there is one *Debt* which we must be studious to pay, and yet can never fully discharge ; and that is the *Debt of Love*. Love is the Epitome of the *whole Law* : and all the *Duties* we owe to one another are virtually comprehended in *loving our Neighbour as our selves*. For no Man is willing to be defrauded, abused, or oppress'd *Himself* : and, therefore, he, that has equal Benevolence to *Others*, will be equally cautious of defrauding, abusing, or oppressing *them*. And this naturally introduces that incomparable *Rule* of our *Saviour*, so excellently calculated for the *Christian's* Direction, in ev'ry Instance of *Duty* to his Fellow-Creatures--- * *All Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.* Here is a *Rule* of Behaviour worthy of its divine *Author*. A *Rule*, suited to all Capacities, and ready at Hand upon ev'ry Emergency. A concise *Rule*, that carries Reason and Equity in the Face of it ; and has an irresistible Power to direct and influence our Conduct. A *Rule*, consisting of very few Words, and yet more comprehensive than some large Volumes. So vastly admired was this short *Adage*,
that

† Rom. xiii. 9.

* Matth. vii. 12.

that History informs us, One of the *Roman* Emperours was desirous to have admitted its *Author* into the Number of the *Heathen Gods*, and to have built him a *Temple*, for the Sake of it. The Application of this *Precept* is so easy and obvious, that I shall not trouble you with any Directions about it. But, before I finish what relates to this *Duty*, you'll give me leave to mention one *particular Branch* of it, which deservedly claims a Place here ; and that is *Charity*. This is as much a *Debt* as any Other : For the same *God*, who gives us our *Estates*, entails this *Rent-Charge* upon them, *That we shall be kind to the Poor*. And such an Affinity is there betwixt these two *Duties*, that, according to * *Dr. Beverige's* Observation, the same *Word*, which in *Hebrew* signifies *Righteousness*, in other *Oriental Languages*, is commonly used for *Charity* ; and indeed the *Hebrew Word* it self is often so translated in the *Septuagint*. And this is all that the Time will permit me to say upon that copious Subject *Righteousness*. I proceed therefore, *Secondly*, to consider the next *Duty* which the *Apostle* treated on, and that is *Temperance*.

The † original *Word*, I think, might more properly be translated *Continence*, and signifies a Command of the Passions, or a Mastery over a Man's Self. And this Acceptation of the *Word* seems more agreeable to the *Apostle's* Design in that Sermon : For his real Intention being not to flatter, but to reprove, and convert the *Judge*, he cou'd not chuse a fitter *Subject* to harangue upon, than that of *Continence* : Because, as *Josephus*, *Tacitus*, and some other *Historians* tell us, *Felix* had been notoriously guilty of its Contrary ; having seduced *Drusilla* from her own *Husband's Bed*, and lived

* *Beverige's* Sermons. † *Εὐσέπεια*.

lived in a continued Course of *Adultery* with her. St. *Paul* preaches here to *Felix*, as *John the Baptist* did once to *Herod*; suitably and honestly enough, but not very gratefully: we don't find, however, that his principal Auditors were much disgusted at the Discourse, or quick to show any Resentments upon it. No doubt but the *Apostle's* Satyr was keen enough, but, withal, artfully managed: And your powerful Offenders can readily bear to be lanced by a skilful Hand; but, to be mangled and torn to Pieces with a rough Edge, to be dissected with a Saw, is a Pain too exquisite to be calmly endured. The *Greek Word*, I say, being more properly translated *Continnence*, and several of the *Eastern Languages*, as well as the best *Commentators*, favouring that Acceptation, I shall be obliged to conform thereto, and briefly describe the *Duty*. *Continnence* then, in the general Notion of it, is an *Abstinence from unlawful Pleasures of what kind soever*: A *Duty* of great Use in Religion; which destroys Sin in the Bud, and carefully fences against the least Approach of Evil. Pleasures too freely tasted are apt to enervate the Mind, and weaken its Guard; they improve our natural Inclinations to Vice and Voluptuousness, and procure Temptations an easy Success. *Continnence*, therefore, which regulates these Inclinations, and keeps them within their due Bounds; which disarms the Force of Pleasure, and prevents it from becoming a Snare to us, must needs be a *Duty* of vast Importance, and worthy of all the *Apostle's* Labour to enforce it. But St. *Paul* having found out the weak Side of his *Judge*, and inform'd himself what *Sins* they were that more easily beset him, apply'd, no doubt, to attack that *Branch* of *Incontinence*, which his unbridled Lust had unfortunately

ly drawn him into ; I mean that flagrant *Sin* of *Adultery*. A Sin, so pregnant of Injustice and Villainy, that it needs the Tongue of an *Apostle* to rally and explode it. I know the Enemy of Souls has so artfully managed this Affair, so dextrously propagated the fatal Delusion, as to perswade some of his Votaries, that it is a venial, inconsiderable, Fault ; and so made it rather a Jest, than a Matter of Abhorrence. But can that be a Jest, or a Trifle, which is plainly repugnant to a ^adivine positive Law ? Which provok'd the Anger, and drew down the *Judgments* of God in ^bsevere *Plagues* ? Can *Adultery* be deem'd a venial Fault, when *Fornication* only, which is attended with less aggravating Circumstances, extended the vindictive *Arm of Providence*, and ^cthree or ^dfour and twenty Thousand of the *Israelites* fell, in one Day, by the irresistible Force of it ? The actual Commission of *Adultery* must needs carry in it great Malignity, when our *blessed Saviour* ^e, in explaining the Commandment, has inform'd us, that even a *lustful Eye* is a *formal Offence* against it.

Any one Sin, committed with Knowledge and Deliberation, is destructive of our Interest in *God*, and renders us obnoxious to everlasting Misery. But the *Sin of Adultery* is an odious *complicated Crime* : Idleness and Luxury are its avow'd Parents, Theft and Injustice its natural and deform'd Offspring. It robs a Man of the dearest *Good* he has in the *World*, and fixes a spurious Brood in his Family : It deprives the legitimate Heirs of their natural Right, renders those *innocent Creatures* flighted and neglected, and necessitates an Injustice

^a Exodus xx. 14. ^b Gen. xii. 17. ^c 1 Corinth. x. 8.

^d Numbers xxv. 9. ^e Matth. v. 27, 28.

stice which no Law can redress. In respect of the married Person 'tis an absolute Violation of the *nuptial Contract*, and involves the offending *Party* in downright *Perjury*. A Man must, therefore, be an infatuated Slave of the *Devil*, and renounce all Claim to Wisdom and Religion, before he can conform to a deliberate Practice of this horrid Crime, this detestable *Sin of Adultery*. And what a scandalous Reflection is it upon a rational Creature, that he has submitted the Reins to Lust, resign'd the Government of himself to *Satan*, and is become a voluntary Candidate for endless Torment! If a Man be really resolv'd to give himself an unlawful Liberty in this Respect, let him join the *Mahometans*; their beastly Principles may better suit his Inclinations: but *Christianity* prohibits all such Indulgences, under the severest Pains; that pure *Religion* abhors such Injuries. *Lastly*, I would have every Libertine to consider, that this *Perfidiousness* in the *married State*, these continued Debaucheries, are often attended with fatal Consequences, to the *Parties* offending. The poor deluded *Woman*, at last, becomes sensible of her *Folly*, and the irreparable *Injury* she has done to the *Partner of her Life*; and thus a tormented *Conscience*, and an incensed *Husband*, conclude her unhappy Days, and bring her *in Sorrow to the Grave*. The base *Author* of this *Injustice* naturally rises in the ill Opinion of the provok'd World; all indifferent Persons flight and abhor him; the injured *Parties* pursue him with the utmost Hatred and Resentment; and his envied *Life*, not less miserable than wicked, frequently terminates in a violent, unnatural, *Death*. As if the

Almighty had set himself particularly against the Sin of *Adultery*, and was fully determined, that they, who rage and burn in unrestrained *Lust*, shou'd be suddenly divorced from their *lewd Embraces*, and finally suffer in the *Flames of Hell*.

If we consider the *Word* according to our *English Translation*, the *Discourse* might still be seasonable, and *à propos* enough. *Incontinence*, in the former Sense, was not the only Vice that *Felix* indulged himself in: For the same † *Historian*, whom I mention'd before, represents him as a Person addicted to all manner of Sin and Impiety, and so great a Proficient therein, that *he procured Men, by Bribery, to murder the High Priest*, because he took the Freedom to reprove him for his repeated Villainies. Whether the *Governour* was notorious for *Intemperance*, as we commonly use the *Word*, is not very material: 'tis certain that such a *Topick* cou'd not be unseasonable in this *luxurious Age*; and, had not the vast Affluence of Matter made me too prolix in this *Article* already, there wou'd have been a very useful Province to declaim in further. For alas! we have the Mortification to observe some such People as the * *Prophet* complains of, inconsiderate Trespassers against the *Rule of Temperance*, who *rise early in the Morning, that they may follow strong Drink, and continue until Night, till Wine inflames them*. 'Tis astonishing to see this enchanted Herd of *Drunkards* running violently down the Precipice of Destruction, and ready to perish in the Abyss of *Hell*: making themselves worse than Brutes, whilst they live, and preparing for everlasting

† Josephus. * Isa. v. 11.

lasting *Burnings* when they come to die : becoming, *in short*, the Jest and Derision of all sensible sober Men, and the utter Aversion of *Almighty God*. But I have not time to pursue this *Subject* any farther, being under an Obligation to consider the *third Thing* which the *Apostle reason'd upon*, and that is a *Judgment to come*.

And now, I conceive, we are arriv'd at the main Occasion of *Felix's Trembling*. His Conscience was not so very tender, but he could willingly indulge himself in the Sins of *Fraud* and *Incontinence* ; cou'd repeat them with Pleasure, and, perhaps, hear himself reprov'd, by such an *Orator* as *St. Paul* was, with some Degree of Patience : But to be convinced that he must one Day render an Account of these wicked Actions, and be condemn'd to *Misery everlasting* for such unrepented Impieties ; these disagreeable Thoughts cou'd not but occasion some melancholy Reflections ; some uneasy Qualms of Mind, some Convulsions of Body : For, whatever *Arguments* a *Preacher* may use to bring Men to *Righteousness*, 'tis certain that the **Terrors of the Lord* do most effectually *perswade Men*.

I shall not have Leisure to attempt a full *Proof* of the *future Judgment* ; neither can I think it needful in a Congregation of *Christians*. And yet, that I may do some *Justice* to this Part of my *Subject*, permit me to offer a few short Considerations on the *Certainty* of that important *Day*.

One substantial *Argument*, to convince us of the Certainty of a future *Judgment*, is justly drawn from *Men's different Successes, and the Inequality of their Fortunes in this present Life*. Whilst we are promiscuously acting upon the Stage of this World, it frequently

ly happens, that wicked Men enjoy the greatest Share of temporal Grandeur : They bask in the Sunshine of an easy Fortune, *fare sumptuously every Day*, and want not any Thing which either Wealth, or Power, can supply them with : Health sweetens their Pleasures, Success follows their Actions, and they seem the *Favourites* of a beneficent God ; *they * come in no Misfortune as other Folk, neither are they plagued like other Men.* On the contrary, the religious good Man, whom no *Premium* can seduce, no gilded Baits allure, to a dishonest Compliance, shall be insolently treated, and severely abused ; become the Scorn, and Derision, of powerful wicked Men, and, perhaps, finish a miserable Life in the utmost Poverty and Contempt. Now, if there were not a *Life* after *this*, wherein *Rewards* and *Punishments* will be distributed *by a more equal Method*, it wou'd be hard to account for the *Justice*, and other *Attributes* of God, who suffers his most innocent and faithful Servants to live, and die, in a Condition thus *destitute, afflicted, tormented*. It is not more necessary for *him that cometh to God* to believe that *he is*, than to be perswaded that *he is* also a *Rewarder of those that diligently seek him*. For what strange Notions, what terrible Thoughts, wou'd the *Belief* of a God, endued with infinite *Power*, create in our Minds, if the Consideration of his *Mercy*, and *Justice*, did not help to soften the harsh Idea ; represent him as a Lover of Souls, a Friend to the Righteous, and, in all other Respects, strictly good, and truly amiable ? From hence, therefore, we rationally conclude — That there will be a great and solemn *Day of Judgment*, when all seeming Inequalities will be fully reconciled ; when the Sufferings

* Psal. lxxiii. 5.

ings of good Men will be fairly compensated, and successful Villains receive their deserved *Condemnation*.

But, *Secondly*, as a farther *Argument* of this *Truth*, we observe — That there is implanted in our *Nature* and *Constitution* an earnest and invincible *Desire* of *Happiness*: 'Tis a Force upon the Mind to entertain any Thing that does not promise, either a real, or at least an apparent, *Bliss*. And it wou'd derogate from the *Goodness* of *God*, to create us with such Appetites and Expectations, if there be no real *Felicity* wherewith to gratify them. Now, that there is no State of perfect Happiness on this Side the Grave, is a Truth allow'd on all Hands, and no One attempts to contradict it. Those who have sought for it in *Riches*, and paid lasting *Devoirs* to that powerful *Deity*, have met with many Crosses and Disappointments, and found the Pretences of their *Idol*, to be mere Sham and Imposture. And they who have sequester'd themselves from the World, and expected to find it in *Solitude* and *Retirement*, have been always apprehensive of some Defect, and still continued in a dissatisfied State. And since we cannot think it consistent with the necessary *Attribute* of *God's Goodness*, to promise us Happiness and baulk us of the Enjoyment, there seems good Ground to believe that there will be a general *Day of Retribution*; when those who have deserv'd it, shall obtain their desired *End*, and gain a joyful Admittance to those *lasting Pleasures*, in the Presence of *God*, which they have long pursued with a steady Patience. This, I say, is what *Reason* itself prompts us to expect, and what *Revelation* assures us will come to pass: *God* has plainly told us in *Scripture* that there is a *Day appointed whereon he will judge the World in Righteousness*: and, therefore, we ought to *have all Joy in believing*, and, with

with all Activity and Chearfulness, to prepare for this critical *Time*.

And, *Thirdly*, the Hopes and Expectations of the Righteous are not more natural, than the *Fears* and *Apprehensions* of those who have the Misfortune to live in a *contrary Way*. Ev'ry One, whose Nature is not forced, whose Conscience is not grown callous and insensible, is upon the committing of any dishonest Action, inwardly check'd and reprov'd, and pursued with *Fears*, through all his solitary Retirements. And that this is not owing to idle *Stories*, traditionary *Fables*, or the *Prejudice* of *Education*, as some Advocates for *Irreligion* are willing to argue (for a sinking Cause must lay hold of a slender Twig) is plain from this *known Fact*, that these *natural Impressions cannot be effaced or destroy'd*. Mistakes are generally confuted by Reason and Experience : but these *Fears* and *Apprehensions* are seldom or never dislodg'd by such Means ; they are the true *Language* of *Nature*, and cannot be extirpated by the *Power* of *Art*. A Man may quiet an uneasy Conscience, for a while, by constant Diversions, or perpetual Debaucheries : He may indeed smother the *Flame*, but cannot totally extinguish it : Whenever the Mind recovers its natural Frame and Temper, these *Embers* of *Discontent* will glow again, and forewarn us of a much more *hurtful Flame*, if a timely Repentance don't help us to escape it. For what can be the Meaning of these necessary *Fears*, and unavoidable *Apprehensions*, except it be that the *Author* of our *Nature* has design'd us to be made sensible of the Guilt and Danger of transgressing ; to be try'd and condemn'd, as it were, in the impartial *Judgment* of our own *Conscience*, and previously admonish'd to prepare better
Accounts

Accounts, against the precarious *Time* of bringing them in? In short the Arguments for a *future Judgment* are so plain, strong, and conclusive, that none, but mere *Atheists*, persist in an obstinate Denial of it; and even *these* have some Struggles of Conscience, some doubtful uneasy Thoughts, which make them *in Part* believe, tho' they strive, by all Means possible, to stifle the *Conviction*. Unfortunate Wretches! they are desirous to shut their *Eyes* against the *Truth*; but they will be miserably convinced at last; the *Devils* themselves cannot withstand it, they must *believe and tremble* too!

I hasten now to the *last Thing* proposed, which is, to *consider the Effect of St. Paul's Discourse on these three Things; as he reason'd of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled.*

This Tremor in the *Judge* proceeded, no doubt, from a Consciousness of his notorious wicked Life in general; and his being guilty of those particular *Sins*, to which the *Apostle* was declaring the *Judgments of God* to be due. And if this harden'd *Infidel* was so affected upon the first hearing of a *Judgment to come*, how shou'd the serious Consideration thereof influence us *Christians*, who have had the *Doctrine* so often sounding in our Ears, and are fully convinced of the important *Truth*? I'm sure, the Thoughts of God's **Judgments* put a much better *Man* than *Felix* into a paralytick Posture: they bent the Knees, loosen'd the Joynts, and made the very *Flesh* to tremble even of a *Man after God's own Heart*. And what *Man* living, when he looks within himself, and there views a sinful impenitent *Soul*; conscious of its being accountable, and hav-

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ing Nothing but Vice and Wickedness to account for, can hope to escape any better? Can any One, who has^a *defrauded or injured his Brother*, and never attempted to make *Restitution*, reflect upon the *last Audit*, without some Uneasiness, when he considers that *God* takes the *Part* of the abused, and declares himself *the Avenger of all such*? Can the^b *Drunkard*, or *Adulterer*, be void of Concern, and sleep with an easy Conscience, unless lull'd by the sovereign Opiate of an immoderate Dose, when he learns, from *Scripture*, that none of *this Character* shall *inherit the Kingdom of God*? And will not these *Terrours* still increase, as the fatal *Day* draws near? I wou'd fain ask the *Common Swearer*, with what Face he thinks he can stand before the tremendous *Majesty of Heaven* at the *Grand Tribunal*; when, loaded with the Guilt of a reiterated Practice, his tormented Conscience shall prefer this heavy *Indictment* in open *Court*? — That, whereas the *Laws of God* had absolutely commanded him^c *not to swear at all* in his common Conversation, he ungrateful had seldom *spoke* without it. That, to render the Prohibition still stronger, the same *Authority* had enjoyn'd him---^d *above all Things not to Swear*; and yet, so obstinate was his Disobedience, he had practis'd *This* more than any *Thing* else. That the *Law-giver* had told him, in express Terms---^e *Every Idle Word that Men shall speak they shall give Account thereof in the Day of Judgment*: yet, so regardless was he of this divine *Caution*, that he had not only given his Tongue a Liberty in *idle*, or vain, *Words*, but had profaned that *sacred Name* in *Trifles*,
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^a 1 Thess. iv. 6.^b 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.^c Matth. v. 34.^d James v. 12.^e Matth. xii. 36.

which shou'd never be mention'd except upon *holy and reverent Occasions*. And what, in the Name of Goodness, cou'd the *Common Swearer* then plead, to extenuate the *Sin* ? This silly, childish, unprofitable *Sin* ? He must certainly tremble, with a *Witness*, when thus accused of habitually disobeying *God*, and serving the *Devil for nought* ! When, upon scrutenizing into his uneasy Conscience, he finds Nothing therein, but the black indelible *Characters* of *Ezekiel's Roll*—* *Lamentations and Mourning and Wo* !

And who can propose to himself any Profit, or Satisfaction, in the Practice of these Things, whereof he must then be ashamed ? *for the End of those Things is Death*. Let every One, therefore, submit to the Conviction, as well as *Felix*, and tremble at the Apprehension of *falling into the Hands of an angry God*. Let him carefully impress upon his Mind the dreadful State of those miserable Wretches, who shall stand condemn'd at that *great and terrible Day of the Lord* ; and, I fancy, he will readily allow that its not a trifling Matter we are thinking on ; that it were better to tremble now, than be in Confusion about it then ; to have such a Sense of his *Sins*, and such a *Sorrow* for them, as may make his Repentance sincere, and available to his Salvation, than to repent for ever after to no manner of Purpose.

Lastly, there are some *Particulars* relating to the *Day of Judgment*, the Consideration whereof will help us to account for the *Agonies* of *Felix*, and move us to such a Conduct, as may prevent any Occasions of *trembling* Ourselves. And, first, we may consider, that we must then appear before a *just and omniscient Judge* :

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* Ezek. ii. 10.

A *Judge*, whose Knowledge Nothing can escape, whose Justice no One can ever impeach. A *Judge*, who left the Regions of Bliss, to prosecute the momentous Concern of our Salvation ; submitted to a miserable Life, and died, in a painful ignominious Way, to appease God and complete it. And how will it enhance the Ingratitude, and aggravate the *Condemnation*, of the *Sinner*, that he has run counter to his own eternal Interest, and slighted the Offers of such ineffable *Love* ? That he has acted a foolish Part, in returning *Hatred* for his *Saviour's* good Will ; and must be finally condemn'd by that indulgent *Redeemer*, who exerted his *Divinity*, and did all that could be done, consistently with Justice, to have secured his Happiness. Our *blessed Lord* will not appear then, as he chose to do upon Earth, *cloath'd with Humility*, and in the *Form of a Servant*, but in the *terrible Majesty* of an offended God : Not accompanied by a few poor *Fishermen*, but humbly waited on, and attended by, *Millions of Angels* and glorified *Spirits* : Not mild and gentle as the *Lamb of the World*, but fierce and implacable as the *Lion of the Tribe of Judah* ; with **Eyes like a Flame of Fire*, and his *Countenance as the Sun shining in its Strength*. So splendid and magnificent will this *Appearance* of our *Lord* be, that unless God shou'd change our Bodies, and give them a *firm* and *immortal Texture*, the whole Fabrick wou'd be dissolv'd ; human Nature cou'd never *abide the Day of his coming*. And when St. *Paul's* moving *Oratory* had set these Things in a true Light, *Felix's Trembling* must cease to be a Wonder : It would be a much greater Wonder, if we, knowing and considering these *real Terrours*, should be less affected than this *Unbeliever* was, or less solicitous to escape the *divine Vengeance*. If

* Rev. i. 17.

If the *Apostle* used no other *Language* to describe the Procedure and Formality of the *last Judgment*, than those Expressions which the *Scriptures* afford for that Purpose, there is *Terrour* enough in *them* to affrighten the Sinner; to make him anticipate here, in some Degree, what a final Impenitence would entitle him to hereafter. For, to omit those terrible *Spectacles* and *Appearances*, which *Christ* and his *Apostles* have mention'd, as the Forerunners of a future *Judgment*; to say nothing of the *Anger* of the *Judge*, the *Strictness* of the *Scrutiny*, and the *Solemnity* of the *Process*; if we only consider the *Severity* of the *Sentence*, which will then be pronounced, we must either startle or be insensible! For Nothing, but a Madman, can stand unconcern'd upon the dire Precipice of *Eternity*, with an Ocean of *Fire and Brimstone* glaring in his Eyes. The horrible Sentence is, — *Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Everlasting Fire! and in the *Devil's* odious Company! Who can dwell with such *Burnings*? Who can endure such an *Associate*? Who can bear the Thoughts of continuing in *Sin*, if he must so severely smart for it at last? And that the Sinner must do so, except, by a prudent Reformation, he take care to avert the Doom, is as certain as *God* is true. *God*, that cannot lie, has expressly told us his Resolution, in this Case; and he wants no *Power* to effect what he so resolves. These are, indeed, melancholy ungrateful *Thoughts*, and yet absolutely necessary to prevent much *more* melancholy dreadful *Sufferings*! But there is one Consideration yet left, which, like the *Sun* recovering from a *Cloud*, brightens up all the Soul, and darts Beams of everlasting Comfort to an anxious Mind. 'Tis this — *All that hear me may avoid this*
Misery,

Misery, if they will. Our *Saviour* refuses no *Sinner* that approaches him with the Qualification of true *Repentance*. I humbly conceive, a *Christian* can hardly be guilty of the *Sin against the Holy Ghost*; and all *Sins and Blasphemies*, besides *That*, our gracious *Redeemer* himself has pronounced pardonable. And what a happy chearful Reflection is this, that, by the Assistance of *God's Grace, which is never denied to those that ask it*, you may not only avoid the *Terrours* before-mentioned, but obtain *everlasting Felicity* too, if you will heartily, and sincerely, set about it? But tho' you may now sue out your Pardon, by *Faith and Repentance*, yet no One can ensure you farther: The *present Time*, indeed, is yours; and you may make it the happy *Date* of your *Conversion*, if you will: But, if you put off your *Return to God* one Moment, you are no longer secure. And who, that has so considerable a *Reversion* to manage, wou'd sit easy and contented 'till he has ascertain'd his *Title*? I perswade my self I have more prudent *Hearers*, Persons more disposed to practise their *Duty*, than *St. Paul's Auditors* were: *Felix trembled* at the *Discourse*, but still he is supposed to have interrupted it: for the *Context* tells us, that, as the *Apostle reason'd of these Things*, *Felix* answer'd, *Go thy way for this Time; when I have a convenient Season I will send for thee*. Many People, like him, are willing to shift off their *Conversion* to a Season which they fancy more convenient: but, since that *future Time* may never be allow'd us, 'tis certainly the safest Way to embrace, and improve, the *Present*.

And this reminds me of the *last Particular*, I shall now mention, relating to the *future Judgment*, and that is the *Precariousness* of the *Time*, or the *Uncertainty* of
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its *Approach*. I know some of the *Fathers* of the *Church* have concluded, from a * *Passage* in *St. Paul's Writings*, that the great *Day of Accounts* was very near : And some other *Authors*, both solid and serious, have pretended to limit the *Duration* of the *World*. But these nice Enquiries, these unsuccessful Conjectures, tend only to confirm, what we learn from better *Authority*, That † of this *Day and Hour knoweth no Man, no not even the Angels* of God. This we do know, and *this Knowledge is sufficient for us*, that God has appointed such a *Day*, whereon we and all Mankind shall assuredly be *judged* : That, be this *Time* when it will, it must, in Effect, commence at the *Hour* of our *Death* : for as our Case then stands, so will it appear when God shall judge the *Secrets* of our Hearts by *Christ Jesus*. It would be monstrous Folly, therefore, not to pursue this consummate *Wisdom* of preparing for our *latter End* : since just now, as I have already hinted, it would stand us in stead, and be of everlasting Advantage : but, this critical *Moment* being imprudently neglected, the *next* may translate us to a *Doom* irreversible ; to exquisite *Misery*, without either Intermission or End. If these Considerations can't convince us of the *Danger* of persevering in *Sin*, and influence our *Minds* to *Repentance*, I know only *One* that assuredly will do it, but alas ! 'twill be too late for Application ; and that is, *the woful Experience of those Judgments* I have just now been describing : But from this *experimental Conviction* may God deliver us all, for *Jesus Christ's sake*. Amen.

* 1 Cor. vii. 29.

† Matth. xxiv. 36.

